

LETTER

DU GÉNÉRAL



LETTER

FROM A

SEA-OFFICER of FRANCE

TO THE

Honourable ADMIRAL KEPPEL.

: T 2 E R

L E T T R E
D'UN OFFICIER
DE L' ARMEE NAVALE
DE FRANCE,
A M. L'AMIRAL KEPPEL,

*A bord d'une Escadre Françoise, près
d'Ouessant, le 9 Août 1778 ;*

*Avec le Plan figuré des principales Évolutions
des Armées, au Combat d'Ouessant.*



A B R E S T :

M D C C L X X V I I I .

LETTER
FROM
An OFFICER
OF THE
NAVAL ARMY of FRANCE
TO THE
Hon. ADMIRAL KEPPEL;

*Dated on board a French Squadron off Ushant,
9th of August, 1778.*

With an engraved Plan of the principal Evolu-
tions of the Fleets, in the Engagement off
Ushant.

TRANSLATED

From the ORIGINAL, printed at BREST.

With some NOTES.



L O N D O N:

MDCCLXXVIII.

LETTRE, &c.

MONSIEUR L'ADMIRAL,

JE ne suis qu'un des moindres Officiers de notre Armée, mais pour défendre la vérité on n'a pas besoin de titres. Je ne sçais quel Auteur de *pamphlets* a fait insérer dans une de vos *Gazettes* une Lettre pleine de contradictions ; il l'a produite sous votre nom : personne dans notre Armée ne vous a fait l'injure de croire qu'elle fût de vous, & ce n'est qu'à l'inconnu qui vous offense, que j'adresse ma réponse.

Je suis, &c.

Monsieur l'Auteur, lorsque vos Généraux éprouvoient en Amérique des revers continuels, ils vantoient en Europe leurs succès imaginaires. Vous avez déjà fait un essai de cette maniere heste & facile, quand vous vous êtes chargé du récit du combat de la *Belle-Poule*. Les François étoient dans leurs rades ; vos Amiraux tenoient la Mer, ils venoient d'enlever très-beureusement deux

LETTER, &c.

Mr. ADMIRAL,

I AM only an inferior officer of our fleet, but for the defence of truth there is no need of titles. Some pamphleteer, I know not whom, has inserted in one of your Gazettes * a letter full of contradictions, and has published it under your name: no one in our navy does you the injustice to suppose it yours, and it is only to the unknown writer who has injured you that I address my answer.

I am, &c.

Mr. Author, while your generals were suffering in America continual defeats, they were boasting in Europe their imaginary successes.— You had before made an essay of this spruce and easy style, when you undertook the relation of the engagement with the *Belle-Poule*!— The French were in their roads; your Admirals kept the sea; they had *very fortunately* taken

[* See this Gazette in the Appendix.]

deux Frégates avec vingt-un Vaisseaux ; l'une des vôtres, moins heureusement, venoit d'être battue, désemparée, forcée de fuir, quand vous prétendîtes que vous aviez été offensés & vainqueurs. Maintenant vous surpassez notre attente & celle de toute l'Europe dans votre nouvelle Lettre du 30 Juillet.

Quelque opinion qu'on eût de votre sagacité, on n'auroit pas imaginé que la rentrée de nos Vaisseaux dans Brest, vingt-quatre heures après la fuite des vôtres, vous donneroit un prétexte d'en imposer à votre Nation, & d'appaiser son premier ressentiment ; mais votre Nation sera détrompée, c'est un hommage que la vérité réclame, les vrais Anglois la respectent, & j'atteste ici en sa faveur, non les vingt mille François qui ont obtenu le champ de bataille, mais les vingt mille Anglois qui l'ont perdu.

Vous dites qu'avant le 27 Juillet les François avoient fui l'occasion de combattre ! Et pourquoi donc vous étiez-vous réfugiés dans la Manche, dont ils gardoient l'entrée, où vous scavigiez qu'ils n'iroient pas, où vous aviez des Ports, où ils n'en ont aucun, où un seul coup de vent, tel que celui du 23 au 24, auroit dispersé leur Armée & jetté leurs Vaisseaux à la côte ? Avant cette époque du 23, c'étoit donc vous mêmes qui vous étiez réduits à des croisières sûres & renfermées,

two frigates * with twenty-one ships ; one of yours †, *not so fortunately*, had been beaten, disabled, and forced to fly, when you pretended that you had been *insulted* and *victorious*. But now you have exceeded our expectation, and that of all Europe, in your new letter of the 30th of July.

Whatever opinion we might have had of your sagacity, we could not have imagined that the return of our ships to Brest, twenty-four hours after the flight of yours, would have given you a pretence to impose on your nation, and to appease its first resentment ; but your nation shall be undeceived, it is a homage due to truth, true Englishmen respect her, and I here attest in her behalf, not the twenty-thousand French who gained the field of battle, but the twenty-thousand English who lost it.

You say, that "till the 27th of July" the French declined the combat. Why then did you take shelter in the channel, of which they guarded the entrance, where you knew they would not go ; where you have harbours, where they have none ; where a single gale of wind, like that of the 23d and 24th, would have dispersed their fleet, and driven their ships ashore ? Before this epocha of the 23d, it was, therefore, you yourselves who were reduced to safe and

[* The Licorne and Pallas.] [† The Arethusa.]
confined

renfermées, en abandonnant à l'Armée Françoise le golfe de Gascogne & les grandes Mers qui y communiquent.

L'éloignement des François, à l'époque du coup de vent du 23, n'eut que l'objet indispensable de leur sûreté; & c'est ce même vent forcé de *nord-ouest* qui les mit au large & vous fit sortir de la Manche, également pour votre sûreté, & lorsque vous fçaviez bien que les François ne pouvoient plus être à portée de vous en défendre la sortie.

Du 24 au 27 vous fûtes à la vue les uns des autres; c'est que les François s'étoient rapprochés de vous dès qu'ils l'avoient pu, dès que les vents s'étoient appasés. Ils n'avoient donc pas évité le combat: ils ne vous le livrerent point, parce que vous l'évitiez vous-mêmes, & qu'ils attendoient d'être joints par deux de leurs Vaisseaux, le *Duc de Bourgogne* & l'*Alexandre*, que la tempête avoit écarterés.

Les François évitoient si peu le combat, qu'ils ne manœuvroient que pour l'engager le 27, quoique ces deux Vaisseaux ne les eussent pas rejoints.

Ils vous y forcerent, lorsque les deux Armées faisant la même route, celle des François *revira par la contremarche*. Cette manœuvre, qui trompoit votre Amiral, mit bientôt l'avant-garde & le centre des

confined cruizes, abandoning to the French fleet the gulf of Gascony and the high seas which communicate with it.

The retiring of the French, at the time of the gale on the 23d, could have no object in view but that indispensable one, their safety; and the same strong north-westerly wind that drove them out to sea made you leave the channel, in like manner for your safety; and when you well knew that the French could no longer be in the way to prevent your coming out.

From the 24th to the 27th you were in sight of each other; this was owing to the French having again approached you as soon as they were able, as soon as the winds had abated.— They did not therefore decline the combat; they did not give you battle because you declined it yourselves, and because they expected to be joined by two of their ships, the *Duc de Bourgogne*, and the *Alexandre*, which had been separated by the storm.

The French were so far from declining the combat that they only manœuvred in order to engage on the 27th, though those two ships had not rejoined them.

They forced you to it, when the two fleets being on the same tack, the French wore on the opposite tack. This manœuvre, which deceived your Admiral, soon put the van and center of the

tre des François hors de mesure. Vous *revirâtes* alors *vent devant*, & vous forcâtes de voiles pour attaquer & séparer, avec l'avantage du nombre, l'arrière-garde de vos ennemis ; alors, par leur manœuvre, & non par les vôtres, vous vous trouvâtes pour la première fois à la portée de leur canon.

Aussi-tôt ils *revirerent de nouveau*, *vent devant tous à la fois* ; & prolongeant leur ligne en sens contraire, chacun de vos Vaisseaux fut obligé de recevoir le feu de tous les Vaisseaux François, & réciprocurement de le leur rendre.

Vous n'ignorez pas que pendant cette promenade militaire de trente de vos Vaisseaux contre vingt-sept (M. le Comte d'Orvilliers en avait mis trois en réserve), vous aviez l'avantage du nombre, des calibres, de l'échantillon de la force & du rang *, puisque vous aviez cinq Vaisseaux de trois ponts, & que les François n'en avoient que deux ; que vous aviez la supériorité de trois cents canons ; que vous étiez panchés par le vent ; que vous aviez par conséquent la facilité de vous servir de tout votre feu quand l'Armée de France ne pouvoit pas faire usage de ses premières batteries : & malgré ces avantages, vous n'ignorez pas non plus, que quand les deux lignes se furent dépassées, tous les Vaisseaux Fran-

* Voyez à la fin le Tableau comparé des deux Armées.

the French in disorder. You then tacked against the wind, and crowded all your sails to attack and separate, by force of numbers, the rear-guard of your enemies; then, by their manœuvre, and not by yours, you found yourselves for the first time within reach of their cannon.

Immediately they tacked again with the wind ahead, all at once, and extending their line on an opposite tack, every one of your ships was obliged to receive the fire of all the French ships, and reciprocally to return it.

You well know that during this military arrangement of thirty of your ships against twenty-seven (of which Count d'Orvilliers had put three in reserve) you had the advantage in number, weight of metal, scantling, strength and rate,* as you had five three-decked ships (+) and the French had only two; that you had the superiority of 300 guns (†); that you were bent by the wind, consequently that you could with ease avail yourselves of your whole fire, while the French fleet could only make use of its upper batteries; and notwithstanding these advantages, you also know that when the two lines had passed each other, all the French ships were

* See at the end a contrasted list of the two fleets.

[† The English had *seven* three-deckers.]

[‡ They had the superiority of three hundred and thirty-eight guns. See the annexed list. Both these mistakes are in favour of the author's argument.]

gois furent en état de manœuvrer & de combattre. Vouz convenez aussi que vous aviez beaucoup souffert ; vous aviez plusieurs de vos Vaillseaux démâtés & sans voiles ; vous en aviez au moins sept désembrés. Les François, malgré la grande inégalité de leurs forces, vous avoient donc battus autant que le genre de combat qui venoit de se donner avoit pu le leur permettre.

Vouz ne craignez pas de dire que dans cette situation les François se formerent en bataille, & ensuite qu'ils se refuserent à un second combat. Cette contradiction est manifeste : se former en bataille, c'est au moins ne pas refuser le combat, c'est au contraire s'y disposer & le présenter de nouveau. Et pourquoi s'y seroient ils refusés, puisque, par vos propres aveux, ils avoient moins souffert que vous ? Mais il est très-aisé de vous prouver qu'ils voulurent vous contraindre à ce second combat comme ils vous avoient contraints au premier.

Les deux lignes s'étant dépassées & suivant un cours opposé, il falloit de toute nécessité que l'une des deux, au moins, *revirât de bord* pour vous remettre en présence. C'étoit le moment décisif de la volonté ; mais votre Armée ne *revira point*, ne se reforma plus, ce furent les François qui *revirerent par la contremarche* ; ils ne craignirent point de se former en bataille sous

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able to work and to fight. You likewise allow that you had suffered much ; several of your ships were dismasted and without sails ; seven at least were disabled (*). The French, notwithstanding the great inferiority of their forces, had therefore beaten you as much as the kind of battle that had been fought, would permit them.

You scruple not to say that in this situation the French *formed in a line*, and afterwards that they declined a second engagement. This contradiction is manifest ; to form in line of battle, is at least not to decline the combat ; it is, on the contrary, to prepare for it, and to offer it again. And why should they have declined it, since, by your own confession, they had suffered less than you ? But it is very easy to prove that they would have forced you to this second combat as they had forced you to the first.

The two lines having passed each other, and being on different tacks, it necessarily followed that one of them, at least, must tack in order to come up with you. This was the decisive moment of the will ; but your fleet did not tack, nor form again, it was the French who wore on the opposite tack ; and therefore they feared

[* This Sir Hugh Palliser, in his account, imputes to the English fleet approaching "without any order or line of battle," while the French were "in a regular, well-formed close line of battle a-head." See *Sir Hugh Palliser's Letter in the London Papers of Nov. 5, 1778.*] not

le vent pour avoir la possibilité d'engager une nouvelle action. Vous mîtes à profit cet avantage du vent pour vous soutenir loin d'eux, & ce n'étoit pas à l'approche de la nuit, comme vous le dites : il vous restoit plusieurs heures de jour, (*) dont on présume que votre Amiral aurroit fait, s'il l'avoit pu, un plus glorieux usage.

Le Général François *sous le vent* ne pouvant pas vous approcher, quand vous ne le vouliez point, vous provoqua en vain à un combat qui ne dépendoit plus que de vous ; & lorsque la nuit fut venue, maître du champ de bataille, *allumant ses feux* pour que vous n'eussiez pas l'excuse de l'avoir perdu de vue, ne vous discernant plus dans la profonde obscurité dont vous vous étiez prudemment enveloppés, vous vous remîtes dans *la Manche* aussi promptement que le désordre de quelques-uns de vos Vaisseaux traîneurs pouvoit le comporter.

C'est après avoir cédé le champ de bataille, après avoir été forcés à un premier *combat de ligne*, quand vous n'aviez cherché qu'une *surprise d'arrière-garde*, après avoir évité une seconde action, après avoir fui toute une nuit *sans fanaux* vers *Plymouth*, & ensuite plus avant jusqu'à *Portsmouth*, pour y réparer vos Vaisseaux délabrés, que vous dites aux vingt mille Compag-

[* " Between two and three o'clock," says Sir Hugh Palliser, " I had passed the sternmost ship of the enemy's line ; at this time Admiral Keppel was at a distance, com-

not to form in line of battle to leeward, to have the possibility of bringing on a fresh action. You availed yourselves of this advantage of wind to keep at a distance from them, and it was not, as you say, at the approach of night: you had many hours of day remaining (*), of which, it may be presumed, your Admiral would have made, if he could, a more glorious use.

The French General to leeward, not being able to come up with you, as you did not chuse it, in vain urged you to a combat which then depended only upon you; and when night came, master of the field of battle, *hanging out his lights*, that you might not have the excuse of losing sight of him, no longer seeing you in the profound obscurity in which you had prudently involved yourselves, you retreated into the channel as speedily as the disorder of some of your straggling ships would allow:

After quitting the field of battle, after having been forced to a first *combat in line of battle*, when you only sought to *surprise a rear-guard*, after avoiding a second action, after having fled a whole night *without lights* towards Plymouth, and afterwards still farther to Portsmouth, to repair your shattered ships, you tell the twenty-

ing up," &c. Sir Hugh's division was the last that came out of the engagement. See Sir Hugh's Letter before mentioned.

thousand

nons de cette fuite, & à l'Europe entière, que les François n'ont pas voulu combattre !

Le Général François resta toute la journée du 28 dans les mêmes eaux où il avoit combattu ; il vous fit suivre par ses Frégates, & vous étiez déjà bien loin quand il profita de la proximité de son Port pour y débarquer ses blessés & réparer des dommages, suites inévitables d'un combat. Dès le lendemain trois de ses Vaisseaux reparurent à l'entrée de la Manche, où se trouve maintenant étroitement renfermé l'ancien orgueil de votre Empire maritime.

Cet exposé simple suffiroit sans doute pour rétablir les droits de la vérité ; mais vous l'avez dévoilée vous-même, Monsieur l'Auteur, en vous efforçant de la déguiser * : chacune de vos phrases contredit celles qui l'ont précédée ou qui la suivent : le détail en est curieux.

J'étois occupé, faites-vous dire à M. l'Amiral, de la poursuite d'une Flotte nombreuse de Vaisseaux de guerre François. Quoi ! dans la Manche, où ils n'étoient pas entrés, d'où vous n'êtes sortis que par les mêmes vents qui les avoient éloignés, & pour éviter les mêmes dangers de la côte ? Vous ne les avez pas poursuivis dans la Manche, où ils n'étoient point ; le combat s'est donné à l'entrée de la Manche : dans quel espace les avez-vous donc poursuivis ?

* Voyez à la fin le plan figuré des évolutions.

thousand companions of that flight, and all Europe, that the French would not fight !

The French General remained all the day of the 28th in the same waters where he had fought ; he ordered his frigates to follow you ; and you were far off, when he availed himself of the vicinity of his harbour to land his wounded, and repair some damages, the inevitable consequences of a battle. Two days after three of his ships again appeared at *the entrance of the channel*, where the ancient pride of your naval empire is now closely confined.

This plain narrative would be sufficient, no doubt, to re-establish the rights of truth ; but you yourself, Mr. Author, have unveiled it by endeavouring to disguise it : every one of your phrases contradicts those which precede or follow it : the detail is curious.

I was in pursuit, you make your Admiral say, *of a numerous fleet of French ships of war*. What ! in the channel, which they had not entered ; which you left only by the same winds which had driven them away, and to avoid the same dangers of the coast ? You did not pursue them in the channel, where they were not ; the battle was fought at the entrance of the channel : in what space therefore did you pursue them ?

* See at the end the engraved Plan of the Evolutions.

La Flotte Françoise étant toujours au vent & gagnant le large, j'employai tous les moyens possibles de la faire de près. . . . , Cette précaution étoit devenue nécessaire à raison de la maniere circonspecte avec laquelle les François manœuvroient. Ils fuyoient & manœuvroient ! Ils gagnoient le large, & se trouvoient au plus près sur Ouessant ! La vérité est qu'ils vous ferroient de près eux-mêmes, & sur la ligne la plus avancée dont ils vouloient vous défendre l'approche.

Les François, ajoutez-vous, commencerent à faire feu sur celui des Vaisseaux de la division du Vice-Amiral Sir Robert Harland. Les François devant Ouessant, sur la ligne qu'ils ne vouloient ni ne devoient pas dépasser, font feu les premiers ; ils avoient le vent & pouvoient vous éviter ; est-ce ainsi qu'ils vous fuyoient ? Mais cette assertion n'est point exacte ; c'est le premier Vaisseau de la division de votre Vice-Amiral qui tira sa premiere bordée sur le Saint-Esprit, quand la manœuvre presstante & hardie du Général François, en ordonnant qu'on virât ENSEMBLE vent devant, eut déconcerté vos projets & vous eut obligé de combattre, non pas une arriere-garde, mais une ligne entière.

Vous voudriez bien que l'on crût que, par le premier feu, les François ont été les agresseurs. Eh ! qu'importe ce premier feu ? des qu'ils avoient été si bien poursuivis, si bien serrés de près, vous vous étiez déclarés leurs ennemis, & la défense,

The French fleet being always to windward, going off, I made use of every method to close in with them that was possible. This became necessary from the cautious manner the French proceeded in. They fled and manœuvred! They were going off, and were nearer to Ushant! The truth is; that they closed in with you themselves, and on the most advanced line; which they wanted to prevent your approaching.

The French, you add, began firing upon the head-most of Vice-Admiral Sir Robert Harland's division. The French off Ushant in a line which they would not nor ought to break, fired first; they were to windward, and might have avoided you; was it thus that they fled from you? But this assertion is not exact; it was the first ship of your Vice-Admiral's division that fired her first broadside on the St. Esprit, when the urgent and bold manœuvre of the French General, by ordering his ships to wear TOGETHER against the wind, had disconcerted your plan, and obliged you to fight, not a rear-guard, but a whole line.

You would have it believed, that, by the first fire, the French were the aggressors. Ah! what signifies this first fire? From the time of their being so well pursued, so well closed in, you had declared yourselves their enemies, and defence, at

fense, au moins, leur étoit permise. Vous n'êtes pas heureux en inventions : vous vantez vos hoftilités quand vous n'en faites aucune, & vous en supposez quand on ne vous en fait point.

Quoi qu'il en soit, de ce fait si peu important pour les ménagemens réciproques dont nous sommes dispensés de part & d'autre, sachons de vous-même quelle fut l'issue de ce combat : *il paroît*, dites-vous, pour M. l'Amiral, que l'objet des François a été de désemparer les Vaisseaux du Roi de leurs mâts & de leurs voiles, projet dans lequel ils ont si bien réussi, qu'ils ont mis plusieurs Vaisseaux de ma Flotte hors d'état de me suivre, lorsque je virai vent arrière à l'effet de porter vers la Flotte Françoise ; je me vis donc obligé de virer encore pour joindre les Vaisseaux, &c.

Les François avoient donc bien réussi à desemparer plusieurs de vos Vaisseaux, & si bien réussi, que plusieurs de ces Vaisseaux ne pouvoient pas vous suivre, & que vous fûtes obligé de virer vous-même pour les joindre. Et qu'auriez-vous voulu que les François eussent fait de mieux ? Ils avoient mis une partie de votre Armée hors de combat, & obligé l'autre de manœuvrer pour la joindre ; c'est à-dire, de cesser de combattre, de rester dans l'impossibilité, non-seulement de nous attaquer, mais même de se défendre.

Si l'aveu de votre embarras & de votre impuissance étoit moins clair, moins précis, je vous dirois que votre ligne étoit dans le plus grand désordre ;

least, was allowed them. You are unlucky in inventions : you boast of your hostilities when you commit none, and you suppose them, when none are committed against you.

Be that as it may, from this fact so unimportant to the mutual respect which we have dispensed with on both sides, let us hear from yourself what was the issue of this combat : *The object of the French, you say, for the Admiral, seemed to be the disabling of the King's ships in their masts and sails, in which THEY SO FAR SUCCEEDED as to prevent many of the ships of my fleet BEING ABLE TO FOLLOW ME when I wore to stand after the French fleet : this OBLIGED me to wear again, to JOIN those ships, &c.*

The French therefore succeeded in disabling many of your ships ; and so FAR SUCCEEDED, that many of those ships could not follow you, and you were obliged to wear yourself to join them. And what could the French have done better ? They had driven part of your fleet out of the action, and had OBLIGED the other to tack to JOIN IT ; that is to say, to cease fighting, to remain in an impossibility, not only of attacking us, but even of defending itself.

If the avowal of your embarrassment and weakness were less clear, less precise, I would tell you that your line was in the greatest disorder ;

désordre ; que plusieurs de vos Vaisseaux étoient demâtés ; quelques-uns sans voiles & sans vergues ; qu'un de ceux à trois ponts, qui portoit pavillon bleu à sa misaine, (*) étoit démâté de son grand mât ; qu'un autre des vôtres fit ridiculement feu de ses deux bords hors de toute portée ; que votre Vaisseau Amiral, après avoir esuyé la bordée de la Bretagne & de la Ville de Paris, arriva tant qu'il le put, & cessa tout son feu ; que celui des François fut si prompt & si terrible, que la Bretagne feula, en longeant votre ligne, tira 1400 coups de canon ; que la Ville de Paris, dérivant par défaut de construction, affaillie de *bassbord* & de *stribord* par votre Amiral de 100 canons, & le Formidable de 90, les combattit tous deux à la fois, & les força de se retirer ; qu'enfin, en terminant le premier combat, nous avions SI BIEN REUSSI à vous désemparer, que d'après votre propre conviction, & dans peu de momens, notre Victoire auroit été complète si notre position nous avoit permis de *regagner le vent*.

Mais quand vous faisez vos mouvemens rétrogrades, quand vous couvriez vos Vaisseaux presqu'immobiles & assez maltraités pour n'avoir

[* The Formidable, Sir Hugh Palliser. "The numerous damages she sustained were owing to her being subjected to the angular fire of a long range of the enemy's ships, as she continued her progress along their line." See Sir Hugh's account.—Among these damages he does not mention the loss of a mast, which therefore probably must be a mistake.]

der; that several of your ships were dismasted; some without sails and yards; that one of the three-deckers, who carried a blue flag at her mizen (*), had lost her main-mast; that another of your ships ridiculously fired her two broadsides out of all gun-shot (†); that your Admiral's ship, after receiving the broadsides of the Bretagne and the Ville de Paris, *brought to*, as well as she could, and ceased all firing; that that of the French was so quick and dreadful, that the Bretagne alone, in passing along your line, fired 1400 cannon shot; that the Ville de Paris, lying by through a fault in her construction, attacked on larboard and starboard by your Admiral of 100 guns, and the Formidable of 90, fought them both at once, and forced them to retire; in short, that, at the end of the first engagement, we had so FAR SUCCEEDED in disabling you, that, by your own confession, and in a few minutes, our victory would have been complete, if our position had suffered us *to regain the wind.*

But while you were making your retrograde motions, while you were covering your ships which were almost motionless, and so ill treated

[† The *Courier de l'Europe* says, that "this ship, (we name her not) fired one of her broadsides in the air, and the other among the English fleet: that the French, with their usual vivacity, which the horrors of bloodshed could not restrain, burst into a general shout and laughter; while the poor Englishman withdrew abashed and disconcerted."]

pas même *pu virer avec vous*, quelle étoit la situation de l'Armée Françoise ? C'est encore de vous que nous pouvons l'apprendre.

Vous avouez que les François, vers le déclin du jour, eurent le tems de rallier leur Flotte & de la FORMER EN LIGNE DE BATAILLE sous le vent de la vôtre ; ils pouvoient donc ce que vous ne pouviez plus, former une ligne de tous leurs Vaisseaux ; donc aucun d'eux n'étoit désemparé ; s'ils se mirent en bataille, ils vous offrirent le combat, que vous n'acceptâtes point, quoi-qu'ayant le vent, vous fussiez libres de l'accepter. Ils oserent vous défier sous le vent ; mais comment auroient-ils pu vous rejoindre, quand vous aviez revirés pour joindre en arrière vos Vaisseaux desemparés ? Ce fut l'avantage du vent, & non le déclin, supposé, du jour, qui, pendant plusieurs heures, vous fit éviter une seconde action, que vous n'étiez plus en état de soutenir.

Comment, après un double aveu si précis, de la situation respective des deux Armées, osez-vous dire aux Nations qui vous jugent, à la vôtre que vous n'avez trompé qu'un moment, que les François se formant en bataille, vous ne cherchâtes point à LES INTERROMPRE dans l'exécution, & que vous les laissâtes se former SANS FAIRE FEU SUR EUX, pensant que leur intention étoit de mesurer galamment le lendemain toutes leurs forces avec les vôtres ?

Ce

that they could not even *wear with you*, what was the situation of the French fleet? This you shall again inform us.

You allow, that *the French, towards the close of the day, had time to form their fleet again, and RANGE IT IN A LINE to leeward of yours*; they could therefore do what you could not, viz. form a line of all their ships; not one of them therefore was disabled; *if they ranged themselves in a line, they offered you battle, which you did not accept, though, having the wind, you were at liberty to accept it.* They dared to defy you *to leeward*; but how could they *come up with you again*, when you had tacked *to join your disabled ships in the rear?* It was the advantage of the wind, and not *the close (as suggested) of the day*, which, for several hours made you avoid a second action, which you were no longer able to sustain.

How, after a double avowal so explicit of the respective situation of the two fleets, can you dare to tell the nations who are your judges, your own, in particular, whom you have only deceived for a moment, that *the French ranging their fleet in a line, you did not DISCOURAGE, but allowed of their doing it WITHOUT FIRING UPON THEM, thinking they meant handsomely to try their force with you the next morning?*

Ce n'étoit pas pour le lendemain, c'étoit sur le champ qu'ils vous avoient présenté le combat : dans l'état où vous étiez, ils avoient plus de jour qu'il ne leur en falloit pourachever de vous vaincre. **VOUS NE CHERCHATES POINT A LES INTERROMPRE ?** Qui croira jamais que vous ayez refusé l'occasion de les battre en les prenant sur le tems d'une manœuvre assez compliquée ? Mais vous n'étiez-là que pour les interrompre, & c'est pour les interrompre que se sont faits les derniers efforts de votre Nation expirante. Si vous n'avez pas voulu les battre, vous avez trahi l'espoir de votre Patrie : si vous ne l'avez pas pu, c'est que vous étiez déjà vaincus.

Vous comptiez sur le lendemain, avec la moitié de vos forces sans doute ; car vous n'avez pas oublié ces Vaisseaux désemparés, hors d'état de virer avec vous, contre la Flotte Françoise, formée en ligne de bataille ; & c'est cette même Armée en bataille que vous supposez en fuite quelques heures après avec ses fanaux imprudemment allumés ! & c'est la vôtre, à moitié désemparée, qui se cachant dans les ténèbres, craignoit modestement d'être éblouie de l'éclat de sa Victoire.

Vous ajoutez ensuite : mais les François avoient été si battus pendant le jour, qu'ils profiterent de la nuit pour se retirer. S'ils avoient été si battus, eux qui vous avoient provoqué en ordre de combat, qu'étiez-vous donc, vous, qui n'aviez pu ni manœuvrer, ni vous former, ni combattre ? Ils profitèrent

It was not for the next morning, it was immediately, that they offered you battle : in the state in which you were, they had more day-light than they wanted to complete their victory. You DID NOT DISCOURAGE THEM ? Who will ever believe that you declined an opportunity of beating them by attacking them at the time of a very complicated manœuvre ? But you were there *on purpose to discourage them*; and it is TO DISCOURAGE THEM that your expiring nation has made her last efforts. If you *would* not beat them, you have betrayed the hopes of your country ; if you *could* not, it was because you were already vanquished.

You depended on *the next morning*, with half of your forces, no doubt ; for you cannot forget those crippled ships, which were *unable to wear with you*, against the French fleet, *formed in line of battle* ; and this same fleet *in line of battle* you suppose to be flying some hours after, with its lanterns *imprudently lighted* ! while yours, half disabled, concealed itself in darkness, modestly fearing to be dazzled with the splendor of its victory.

You add ; but the French had BEEN SO BEATEN in the day, that they took the advantage of the night to go off. If they had been SO BEATEN, they who had challenged you in order of battle, what were you then ; you, who could neither tack, nor form, nor fight ? They took the advantage of the

fiterent de la nuit pour se retirer ! ils allumerent leurs feux pour vous attendre, quand la nuit, qui ne servoit que vous, leur déroboit votre fuite.

Les premiers rayons du jour nous retrouverent sur le champ de bataille que vous aviez abandonné, & que nous ne quittâmes que parce qu'il n'y restoit plus une seule voile ennemie.

La Flotte du Roi ne put pas nous atteindre ! en s'éloignant de nous, on le croira sans peine. Dans l'état où se trouvoient les Vaisseaux à l'égard de leurs mâts, de leurs vergues, & de leurs voiles. En vérité, Monsieur l'Auteur, dans cet état des mâts, des vergues, & des voiles, dont vous convenez si ingénument, & les ailes coupées, il ne vous auroit pas été facile de nous faire fuir, quand vous ne pouviez pas nous approcher ; & comme vous concluez très-à-propos, il ne vous restoit PAS MEME A DELIBERER sur ce qu'il étoit convenable de faire.

Encore un mot, Monsieur l'Auteur, & ce sera pour vous rendre justice. En effet, votre lettre, d'un bout à l'autre, dit que vous avez été battus, en concluant que c'est nous qui l'avons été. Mais à l'avenir, lorsque vous ferez d'ingénieuses relations, & que vous vous amuserez à vous contredire, n'empruntez plus la faveur d'un nom cher à vos compatriotes & respecté dans tous les lieux où l'on honore la réputation & le courage ; & si vous essayez encore de tromper votre Nation par le récit de succès imaginaires, choisissez un théâtre plus éloigné de ses yeux : battez Washington tout

the night to go off! They hung out their lights to wait for you ; when the night, which was serviceable only to you, concealed from them your flight.

The first beams of day-light found us on the field of battle which you had abandoned, and which we quitted only because not a single enemy's sail remained there.

The King's fleet could not get up with us! (by going from us, will be easily believed) *in the state the ships were in, in their masts, yards, and sails.* Indeed, Mr. Author, in this state of *masts, yards, and sails*, which you so ingenuously confess, and with your wings clipped, it would not have been easy for you to have made us fly, when you could not approach us ; and as you very properly conclude, *you had NO CHOICE LEFT of what was adviseable to do.*

One word more, Mr. Author, and that shall be to do you justice. In fact, your letter, from beginning to end, says that *you* were beaten, by concluding that we were so. But in future, when you compile ingenious narratives, and amuse yourself with contradictions, do not borrow the credit of a name dear to your countrymen, and respected in all places where reputation and courage are honoured ; and if you should again endeavour to deceive your nation by the recital of imaginary successes, chuse a scene more remote from her view ; beat Washington

tout à votre aise, & couronnez les *Héros de Saratoga* : noyez sans pitié *M. d'Estaing* ; dites que vous êtes toujours chers à ces *poltrons de l'Amérique* ; que l'on vous aime dans l'Inde ; que vous défendrez dans *Portsmouth* votre charte authentique de l'*empire des Mers* : vantez l'honnêteté de vos débats Parlementaires & les mouvements heureux de vos ressorts politiques ; rappellez-vous ces tems où ne triomphant que par la supériorité du nombre, vos voiles commerçantes couvraient les deux hémisphères ; que des rêves complaisans vous retracent cette gloire passée, & gardez le silence sur les malheurs de l'*Amiral Biron*, & la croisière incivile de *M. de Fabry*.*

Je suis, &c.

* Un étranger débarqua à Londres : dans cette Cité parfaitement libre, comme chacun sait, il rencontra dix fois en une heure les *Gens de la presse* qui poursuivoient les passans pour en faire des Matelots & des Soldats, à coups de bâton ; le lendemain il alla à *Portsmouth*, monta sur un Vaisseau, & y trouva la moitié de ces héros involontaires enchaînés à fond de cale ; le surlendemain il vint à *Brest* ; les Matelots qui y arrivoient sans gardes & sans contrainte, s'y disputoient l'honneur d'être embarqués les premiers ; il se promena de Vaisseau en Vaisseau, & il vit par-tout, sous des couleurs animées, l'empreinte du courage & de la liberté. Deux Gentilshommes Bretons s'étoient présentés pour Volontaires ; le Général les avoit refusés : ils offrirent de payer les congés de deux Soldats, & de servir à leur place : tous les Soldats refusèrent. L'Etranger en quatre jours avoit jugé les deux Nations & présagé avec certitude la destinée de leurs armes.

ington quite at your ease, and crown the heroes of Saratoga : drown without mercy M. d'Estaing ; say that you are still dear to those *poltroons of America* ; that you are beloved in India ; that you will defend at Portsmouth your *authentic charter of the empire of the sea* : boast of the decorum of your parliamentary debates, and the happy movements of your political springs ; recall those times, when, triumphing only by the superiority of numbers, your commercial sails covered the two hemispheres ; let complacent dreams recount that glory past, but be silent as to the misfortunes of Admiral Byron, and the uncivil cruize of M. de Fabry (+)

I am, &c.

* A foreigner arrives at London : in that city which, as every one knows, is *perfectly free*, he meets ten times in an hour, *press-gangs*, pursuing passengers, in order to make them soldiers or sailors, by dint of *bastinadoes* : the next day he goes to Portsmouth, embarks on board a ship, and there finds half those involuntary heroes chained down in the hold ; two days after he lands at Brest ; the sailors who arrive there unguarded and unconstrained, are disputing the honour of being first embarked ; he goes from ship to ship, and every where sees, in animated colours, the stamp of courage and freedom. Two gentlemen of Bretagne tendered themselves as volunteers ; the General refused them : they offered to pay for the discharge of two soldiers, and to serve in their room ; all the soldiers refused. The foreigner in four days forms a judgment of the two nations, and pre-sages with certainty the fate of their arms.

[+ Commander of a French squadron which has taken some prizes in the Mediterranean.] [P. S. To

[P. S. To the account given by Sir Hugh Palliser (see the note on page 13.) of the mode of attack in this engagement, to which that Admiral ascribes "the numerous damages sustained by the ten ships in his division, equal to those sustained by the remaining twenty,"* the Translator begs leave to add the 11th Resolution of the Court Martial on Admiral Byng, of which Mr. Keppel was one of the members, viz.

"The Court are unanimously of opinion that when the British fleet on the starboard tack were stretched abreast, or about the beam of the enemy's line, the Admiral should have tacked the fleet **ALTOGETHER**, and immediately have conducted it on a direct course for the enemy; the van steering for the enemy's van, the rear for their rear, each ship for her opposite ship in the enemy's line, and under such a sail as might have enabled the worst sailing ship, under all her plain sail, to preserve her station :"

And also to observe, on the authority of the late Hon. Mr. Thomas Hervey, that "Mr. Boscawen being asked whether he approved of the disposition made by Admiral Byng, and his approaches to the enemy; very modestly made answer, that "he believed he should have formed his attack in another manner; he should have chosen, he said, to have gone up in a line of battle ahead, to some appointed distance, from which he would have given his captains orders to depart like a file of musketeers; by which means all his own ships would have been equi-distant from those they were respectively to oppose on the side of the enemy."†]

[* Admiral Keppel's division, 43 killed, and 142 wounded: Sir Robert Harland's, 42 killed, and 45 wounded: Sir Hugh Palliser's, 68 killed, and 186 wounded.]

[† "A Letter from a Patriot in retirement to the Right Hon. Mr. William Pitt, upon the resigning of his employment, 1761."]

N B. The Translator's Notes are inclosed in []. Not being a Seaman, he may possibly have mistaken some of the sea-terms, and has therefore thought it necessary to reprint the French.

List of the two Fleets of France and England at the time of the Battle.

FRENCH FLEET.

1st Division, Center.

Count d'Orvilliers.	Guns.
La Bretagne	110
La Ville de Paris	92
L'Orient	74
Le Pendant	74
Le Magnifique	74
L'Actif	74
L'Artésien	64
Le Réflechi	64
L'Eveillé	64
	690

2d Division, Van-guard.

Count Duchaffaut.	Guns.
La Couronne	80
Le Glorieux	74
Le Palmier	74
Le Dauphin Royal	74
Le Bien Aimé	74
Le Saint Michel	64
Le Vengeur	64
L'Actionnaire	64
	568

3d Division, Rear-guard.

His R. H. the Duke de Chartres.	Guns.
Le Saint Esprit	80
Le Robuste	74
Le Conquerant	74
L'Intrepide	74
Le Zodiaque	74
Le Diademe	74
L'Indien	64
Le Roland	64
Le Sphynx	64
L'Amphion	50
	692
Total	1950

[* This in the French is miscalculated 564.]

[† This in the French is miscalculated 746.]

[† This is mistotalled 736.]

[§ Sir Hugh Palliser, though he commanded the Rear, is a Vice-Admiral, and had his flag in the Formidable, (as mentioned in this letter) which therefore is misplaced in Admiral Keppel's Division.]

ENGLISH FLEET.

1st Division, Admiral.

Hon. Augustus Keppel.	Guns.
Victory	100
Sandwich	90
Duke	90
Formidable	90
Robust	74
Vengeance	74
Foudroyant	74 80
Exeter	64
Vigilant	64
America	64
	784†

2d Division, Vice-Admiral.

Sir Robert Harland.

Queen	-	90
Monarch	-	74
Shrewsbury	-	74
Prince George	-	74 90
Egmont	-	74
Elizabeth	-	74
Valiant	-	74
Centaur	-	74
Berwick	-	74
Courageux	-	74
		756‡

3d Division, Rear-Admiral. §

Sir Hugh Palliser.

Ocean	-	90
Ramillies	-	74
Thunderer	-	74
Cumberland	-	74
Terrible	-	74
Defiance	-	74 64
Hector	-	74
Sterling Castle	-	64
Bienfaisant	-	64
Worcester	-	64
		726

|| Add the Prince George
and Foudroyant under-rated
22, and deduct 10 from the

Defiance - - 12

English Total 2278

French 1950

Difference 328

APPENDIX.

The LONDON GAZETTE EXTRAORDINARY.

Admiralty-office, August 2, 1778.

CAPTAIN FAULKNER, of his Majesty's ship the Victory, arrived at this office yesterday in the afternoon, with a letter from the Hon. Augustus Keppel, Admiral of the Blue, and Commander in chief of his Majesty's ships employed to the westward, to Mr. Stephens, of which the following is a copy:

SIR, *Victory, at Sea, July 30, 1778.*

MY Letters of the 23d and 24th instant, by the Peggy and Union cutters, acquainted you, for their Lordships information, that I was in pursuit, with the King's fleet under my command, of a numerous fleet of French ships of war.

From that time, till the 27th, the winds constantly in the S. W. and N. W. quarters, sometimes blowing strong, and the French fleet to windward going off, I made use of every method to close in with them that was possible, keeping the King's ships at the same time collected as much as the nature of a pursuit would admit of, and which became necessary from the cautious manner the French proceeded in and the disinclination that appeared in them to allow of my bringing the King's ships close up to a regular engagement. This left but little other chance of getting in with them, than by seizing the opportunity that offered, the morning of the 27th, by the wind's admitting of the van of the King's fleet under my command, leading up with, and closing with, their center and rear.

The French began firing upon the headmost of Vice-Admiral Sir Robert Harland's division, and the ships with

with him, as they led up; which cannonade the leading ships and the Vice Admiral soon returned, as did every ship as they could close up: The chace had occasioned their being extended, nevertheless they were all soon in battle.

The fleets, being upon different tacks, passed each other very close: the object of the French seemed to be the disabling the King's ships in their masts and sails, in which they so far succeeded as to prevent many of the ships of my fleet being able to follow me when I wore to stand after the French fleet; this obliged me to wear again, to join those ships, and thereby allowed of the French forming their fleet again, and range it in a line to leeward of the King's fleet, towards the close of the day; which I did not discourage, but allowed of their doing it without firing upon them, thinking they meant handsomely to try their force with us the next morning; but they had been so beaten in the day, that they took the advantage of the night to go off;

The wind and weather being such that they reached their own shores before there was any chance of the King's fleet getting up with them, in the state the ships were in, in their masts, yards and sails, left me no choice of what was proper and adviseable to do.

The spirited conduct of Vice-Admiral Sir Robert Harland, Vice-Admiral Sir Hugh Palliser, and the Captains of the fleet, supported by their officers and men, deserves much commendation.

A list of the killed and wounded is herewith inclosed.

I send Captain Faulkner, Captain of the Victory, with this account to their Lordships,

and am, SIR, your most obedient
and very humble Servant,

Philip Stephens, Esq; A. K E P P E L.

Secretary of the Admiralty.

List

*List of men killed and wounded, in the action with
the French fleet, the 27th of July, 1778.*

<i>Ships names.</i>	<i>K.</i>	<i>W.</i>	<i>Ships Names.</i>	<i>K.</i>	<i>W.</i>
Monarch	2	9	Vengeance	4	18
Exeter	4	6	Worcester	3	5
Queen	1	2	Elizabeth	0	7
Shrewsbury	3	6	Defiance	8	17
Berwick	10	11	Robust	5	17
Sterling Castle	2	11	Formidable	16	49
Courageux	6	13	Ocean	2	18
Thunderer	2	5	America	1	17
Vigilant	2	3	Terrible	9	21
Sandwich	2	20	Egmont	12	19
Valiant	6	26	Ramillies	12	16
Victory	11	24	Total	133	373
Foudroyant	5	18			
Prince George	5	15			

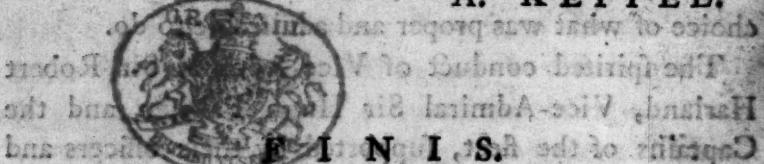
Officers wounded;

Lieut. Nicholas Clifford, 2d of the Formidable.

Lieut. William Samwell, 3d of the Shrewsbury.

Lieut. John M'Donald, of the Marines, P. George,
Surgeon of the Elizabeth.

A. KEPPEL.



F I N I S.

ERRATUM.

PAGE 11, for "338," read "328."